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Continuation *110*

OF THE

DEFENCE

OF THE

REMARKS

ON

Dr. *WELL'S*'s

LETTERS

In a Fifth and Sixth Letter to the Doctor.

By *JAMES PEIRCE*.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *J. Humfreys*, for *John Lawrence*
at the Angel in the Poultry. 1707.

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In a fifth and sixth Letter to the Doctor

By JAMES PEARCE.

LONDON,
Printed by J. Blandford, for John Blandford
at the Angel in the Strand, 1797.

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A Fifth Letter Address'd to Dr. Wells, in Answer to his Two Letters, in reference to the Remarks on his Letter to a Dissenting Parishioner.

SIR;

I Have perus'd your Letter to my self, and that at the End to a Dissenting Parishioner, in reference to the Remarks in my Second Letter; and do now return you my Thoughts concerning them: I could have done it immediately, if I had thought your Letters had contain'd any thing material in the Controversy, or difficult for a common Reader to see through; but finding it otherwise, I thought 'twould be time enough to answer these, when you gave me occasion for another Answer. I suppose you will not be angry, that I judge your unprov'd Assertions of my false Arguing, false Interpretation, false Doctrine, and other disingenuous and foul Dealing, to be only Words us'd to amuse your Reader, and to be a Trick and Sham, which you think will be of Service in a Dispute. When you shall have swell'd your Answer to a considerable Bulk, if 'tis all like this short Specimen you have given us of it, I shall esteem it as demonstrative an Evidence and Proof of a compleat and total Victory, as a Disputant can desire. What you have said hitherto is so very trifling, that a little more of the same nature, will make me despise disputing with you; which I mention, that I may engage you to write with more Strength and Evidence; and then the confident Boastings and Triumphs, which appear now with so ill a Grace in your Writings, will better become them. I took your own Method, and answer'd you in the Order you had set things, and yet you are for a new one: I could perhaps guess the Reason, if I were as free on that Head as you are: But, Sir, you shall take what Method you please; and, provided you will but talk to the Purpose, I shall be ready to attend you.

You boast in your Theses concerning the Invalidity of Presbyterian Ordination, which, you see, I am ready to discuss, and have given you my Reasons why I think otherwise of them than you do.

And I shall be as ready as you to debate the second Question you propose, whether you or we are guilty of Schism?

And I hope my Aims and Endeavours in clearing this Matter are as laudable as yours. I shall now consider what you say in this Letter to me concerning some Scraps you have pick'd out of my two first Letters.

You say, *Whereas I set you forth in several places, and particularly the first and last Paragraphs of my second Letter, as a most uncharitable Fellow* (but Fellow is not my word, 'tis your own, tho the Reader might suspect it to be mine, as 'tis Printed :) *on account of the damning Sentences which you pass on me and my Party : Could you but prevail with me to use Moderation, and with Coolness of Temper to consider of the Matter, you perswade your self that I should quickly perceive that I speak very improperly, not to say falsely, when I affirm you pass damning Sentences upon us.* Well, Sir, you have easily gain'd this Point, and have prevail'd with me to use Moderation, and Coolness of Temper ; but yet I can't perceive any thing of what you say, because I can't, however moderate I am, put out my own Eyes, or contradict the plain Testimonies they give me in this Case. But you go on thus ; *You can't but your self own (Letter ist, p. 60.) that any Sin, and consequently Schism, is of it self of a destructive damning Nature : And this, I suppose, you own, (as well as I) because the Scripture plainly declares so much : Whence it follows, that either you, as well as I, pass damning Sentences on Schismatics ; or else, that 'tis neither you nor I, but in reality the Scripture, that passes damning Sentences against Schismatics ; and what either you or I do, when we say that Schismatics are in a State of Damnation, can possibly amount to no more, than a Declaration of the damning Sentences passed by the Scripture on Schismatics.*

Can any thing be more trifling and incoherent than this ? Certainly if you had both a good Cause, and Ability to manage it, you would not talk after this loose rate. I own, *that any Sin, and so Schism, is of a destructive damning Nature in it self ; that is, that it deserves Damnation, and without pardoning Grace, would infer it.* But may I therefore say, because there is no Man free from Sin, that all Men are in a State of Damnation ? When we talk of Mens being in a State of Damnation we mean somewhat more than their doing that which in it own nature deserves Damnation ; viz. their being such, who have no Right by the Covenant of Grace to Pardon and Salvation. But this Right a Man may have, notwithstanding several Sins which in their own Nature are destructive : So that the Question here really comes to this ; Whether, according to the Gospel, it be certain, that a Man who believes in Christ, and sincerely performs his whole Duty to God, as far as he knows it, using too all means for the Knowledge of it, and yet, through mistake

mistake in disputable Matters not essential to Religion, is guilty of Schism, is thereby excluded from all Benefits by the Covenant of Grace, and so in such a Condition, that if he dies in it, he shall be certainly damn'd? This, I say, is false; and therefore, tho I own'd Schism in its own nature damning, I deny'd that all Schismatics are in a State of Damnation; and particularly express'd my Charity toward your Party, whom I judge to be guilty of that Sin. You add; *This being so, it will follow (supposing I should be mistaken in the Application, yet) the utmost I can be guilty of, in applying to the Dissenters the damning Sentences pass'd by the Scripture on Schismatics, is only a bare Error of Judgment; and there is not the least Ground for accusing me of Uncharitableness.*

But, with your good leave, Sir, do not the Protestants on good Ground accuse the Papists of *Uncharitableness*, for damning all out of their own Church, and yet notwithstanding this is an Error in their Judgments? And indeed your very judgment (as well as theirs) is uncharitable; and that renders your Uncharitableness the more inveterate and deadly: And your very Judgment, as I have observ'd in my second Letter, p. 32. is most injurious to those Notions we are to form of God, and his Goodness from his Word. We don't accuse you as uncharitable, because you endeavour to convince Persons of what you judge to be a Mistake, but because you so rashly condemn your Neighbours, when they do not by their Infidelity or Disobedience to the Laws of Christ, give you any ground for it: And therefore I shall here use the Words of Arch Bishop Tillotson, in his Sermon on 1 Cor. 3. 15. "I grant that no Charity teaches Men to see others damn'd, and not to tell them the Danger of their Condition; But 'tis to be consider'd, that damning of Men is a very hard thing, and therefore whenever we do it, the Case must be wonderfully plain.

And therefore afterwards he says thus; "And I do assure you, I had much rather persuade any one to be a good Man, than to be of any Party or Denomination of Christians whatsoever. For I doubt not but the Belief of the ancient Creed, provided we entertain nothing that is destructive of it, together with a good Life, will certainly save a Man.

After I had allow'd that Schism is in it self of a destructive damning nature, I added, *Yet we take not upon us to judge the Conformists Eternal State, as they, many of them, do very freely ours. We know they have a merciful God to deal with, who knows how to make Allowances for the Prejudices of Education, or the Biass, that the Vogue of the World, or Interest, do in some measure give to Men that are yet truly sincere and upright.* Upon this,

this, tho it be not in the Letter you pretend to animadvert on, you waste no less than three Pages; which, together with the perfect Innocence, Charity and Truth of the Passage, will, I doubt not, convince unprejudic'd Persons, that you wanted Matter for this Letter, and were more concern'd to say something, than you were what it should prove.

I profess I am still of the Opinion, that this is far from being *Latitudinarian Divinity with a Witness*, as you term it. You are, I think, the first, and in likelihood will be the last Man that ever denied it: And herein I suppose you would not have been singular, had you not been tempted to it by a Desire of reviling me, and by a want of some better Materials for a Dispute; which perhaps will seem strange to a Man that reads my second Letter.

You think 'tis not consistent with Sincerity or Uprightness, for a Person to be in any measure byass'd by Interest. I never asserted that Uprightness was consistent with an obstinate, deliberate preferring of any selfish Interest to a Man's Duty to God; or that a Man could be justly said to be an upright Man, who allow'd himself in known Sin, to promote his Interest. Your Conscience has Latitude enough, to allow you to strain my Words to such a sense, as no one beside your self can think they will bear; and I suppose you thought it would be for your Interest to do so, and therefore, I fear, must be here self-condemn'd.

I suppos'd the Matter under Consideration to be disputable, and that there may be some plausible Reasons alledg'd on the wrong side, but that with all temporal Interest was apparently for it; and I said, I thought *Interest* might, in this Case, give *up. 46* a Byass, in some measure, to Men who were yet truly sincere and upright; that is, not through their Wilfulness, while they resolve to pursue their Interest, right or wrong, or tho they are convinc'd that their Interest and Duty will not consist, but through meer Inadvertency. They are willing to have their Interest and Duty conjoin'd, and to be convinc'd they are so; and therefore are more easily prevail'd on, and satisfy'd by some plausible Arguments to believe they are. I own they ought to watch against this, and to repent of it, when they discover that Interest has thus byass'd them: But I doubt not at all that this may often happen, as many other Failings of a good Man's Life, through Inadvertency or Surprise, and may therefore slip his notice, and never be repented of particularly, but only in the general: And in that Case, I make no doubt, where the Tenour of a Man's Life is consonant to the Divine Law, that such Failings and Infirmities are forgiven him. And I

am very much inclin'd to that *Latitudinarian Divinity* (if it must be so nam'd) that judges of Mens Integrity not by a single Act, which may not it self be upright, but by the prevailing Bent of a Man's Heart, and the main Course of his Life. I will ask you, Whether you do not think St. *Peter* was a sincere and upright Man? and yet was somewhat mov'd by *Vogue* and Interest (that is, some kind of sinful Selfishness) when he, with several more, acted in that manner, mention'd, *Gal. 2. 11, 12, 13, 14.* when St. *Paul* says expressly, they walked not uprightly? Or I might ask, Whether you do not believe that the two Sons of *Zebedee* were sincere and upright Men, and yet were byass'd by Interest in their Petition to our Lord, to sit the one on his Right Hand, and the other on his Left, in his Kingdom? I might ask you, Whether you do not think a sinful Interest, in some or other of the Branches of it, is not the main Temptation that occasions the Sins and Failings of sincere and upright Men? I am inclin'd to think this is one way or other at the bottom of most Sins: And therefore since I judge the Sincere and Upright do daily sin, I think it not unreasonable to suppose this in some measure to byass them. Again, do you believe, Sir, that there is no sincere and upright Man that ever sins, in not being as charitable as he ought to the Poor? Or do you think, that if such an one may possibly sin in this Respect, he is not therein, in the least measure, byass'd by Interest? Or do you think that every sincere Man, in a way of Trade, does not in the least measure exceed due bounds in seeking the World? or that if he does, he is not byass'd by Interest to do so? Or will you say, that all those famous Writers of your own Church were not in the least measure byass'd by Interest, who wrote with so much Heat and Earnestness for Passive Obedience? or those who have since renounc'd that Doctrine? or will you say, that all those who were in the least measure byass'd by Interest, were not sincere and upright? Do you think the Nonjurors are the only sincere and upright Men in the Nation? Or do you think that all those, who declar'd that it is not lawful, on any pretence whatever, to take up Arms against the King, had not their Judgments in the least measure byass'd by Interest, when they judg'd that Declaration to contain only a Truth? In fine, Sir, I ask you, Whether you are willing to have your Sincerity and Uprightness try'd by your own Rule at the great Day? Are you willing that God should condemn you for ever as insincere and hypocritical, if you can then be found to have ever been (suppose in the last 20 or 30 Years past of your Life) IN THE LEAST MEASURE byass'd by Interest, of which you have not particu-

larly repented? Dare you say this? For my own part I dare not for ten Thousand Worlds; but desire to rely on the Mercy of God for the Forgiveness of those manifold Failings I may have been guilty of in this kind, which I observ'd not at their particular times, and have not therefore been able to repent of particularly since. Nor are my Notions peculiar in this respect: Do not your own chief Writers allow as much? I have had the Curiosity on this Occasion to consult some eminent Writers of your own; such as Arch Bishop *Tillotson*, Dr. *Sherlock*, Dr. *Barrow*, and Dr. *Lucas*; and shall be ready to produce their Testimonies if you call for them: And the only Reason why I do it not now, is, because they would swell my Answer too much; and the Case is so plain as to render it needless. I shall therefore content my self with the Testimony of Dr. *Hammond*, Practical Catechism, *Lib. 2. Sect. 1.* Where he has these words; "But the Truth is, as long as we live here, and carry this Flesh about us, somewhat of Carnality there will remain to be daily put out, and so also some Doubtings, some Reliques of Hypocrisy, somewhat of my self, my own Credit, my own Interest, still secretly interposing in my Godliest Actions. But these (so they be not suffer'd to reign, to be the chief Masters in me, to carry the main of my Actions after them) may be reconcileable with a good Estate; as humane Frailties, not wasting Sins. Nay, I do not easily believe your own Divinity will disallow of this, nor can I think so meanly of your Understanding, as to question whether you did not perceive my Meaning. And, Sir, if you have endeavour'd herein wilfully to traduce me, think not that God will pardon this Injury without a particular Repentance, and a Satisfaction as publick as the Injury it self.

You argue against me from the Common People, who when they would prove a Man sincere, alledge this, *that he will not in any measure be byass'd by Interest*; but truly I judge their Expression is Hyperbolical, unless they mean thus, that he will not knowingly and wilfully be so byass'd. And I very much question whether any single Virtue (and particularly a Contempt of the World) be ever perfect in any Man in this Life: And yet your Hypothesis is built on that Opinion.

You say, *Our Saviour plainly affirms, Mat. 6. 24. Ye can't serve God and Mammon; but you, Sir, on the contrary, teach in effect, ye can serve God and Mammon: For to be byass'd by Interest, so far as to be kept from discovering and practising one's Duty to God, is no other than to serve Mammon.* But do not all allow, that a Man is to be denominated not from single Acts and unobserv'd Frailties, but from the general and main bent of

of his Life and Actions ? Has not every true Servant of God Work and Business to do in this Matter, to mortify those worldly Affections that still remain in some measure in him, tho the full Power and Dominion of them be broken ? Let Dr. Hammond be here consulted, who knowing the Truth of what I asserted, and which I have set down from him, thus paraphrases that Text, Mat. 6. 24. " Even so the tending and observing of Wealth, doing nothing but may in the Eye of the World tend to the Increase of Riches, is not reconcileable with the serving of God, doing what Christ requires of us.

And he that will consult the *Synopsis Criticorum*, will find others, and particularly *Grotius*, thus to expound the Text ; and I persuade my self you are the first Man in the World who ever interpreted that Text, so as to exclude from being the Servants of God, those who had any sinful Regard to the World ; and by the same kind of Reasoning, you might prove from Rom. 6. 16. that no Sin is consistent with a Man's being a Servant of Righteousness ; and shew your Unmercifulness to all Mankind. And now I need not consider distinctly the wild Suppositions you put, which no more concern me than the Man in the Moon.

But only as you are pleas'd before you leave this, and several times afterward, to reflect on me and my Party, as byas'd by Interest, I beseech you next time to let me know what Interest the Generality of Dissenters can be suppos'd byas'd by ; who by their Dissent put themselves, as you know, to a Charge in several Respects, which they would be otherwise free from. Or what Interest is it that byassies me ? I declare plainly, Interest do's so far byass me, that I am very willing to be convinc'd of the Lawfulness of Conformity, tho I hope it neither does nor shall byass me to do any thing wilfully against the Conviction of my Mind ; and I will endeavour that it shall not hinder the Impartiality of my Judgment. I beg Pardon of my Reader for detaining him thus Long in so plain a Case. I can as easily pass over an impertinent Ramble as another, but when 'tis set out with a grave and solemn Air, and attended with the Charge of false Doctrine, 'tis really provoking, and will apologize for a longer Answer. And as to you, Sir, I shall only pity you, and pray God throughly to convince, and graciously pardon you.

In the next place you take notice of what I say, *That the Dissenters are not able on their side to end the Division.* You say, *You would fain know for what Reason.* And that you may easily know from my Letters, wherein I have spoken plainly enough ; and therefore can't but wonder at such Discourse as this from you.

you. You say, *There are no hard or sinful Terms impos'd on us; that is, I suppose, none that you think so, but, you know, we think otherwise, on such Reasons as you have not, as yet, thought fit to answer. And therefore the rest of your Paragraph is useless.*

You put it to me, *Whether the old Puritans, or Nonconformists, were not as truly zealous against Popery as we can be.* Well, let it be so; and neither of us can be charg'd with want of Zeal against Popery. You say, *Albeit they did dislike many things as we do, yet they judg'd it their bounden Duty not to begin a Division from the Church, because they plainly foresaw it would give Advantages to Popery.* And you think this Difference between them and us is owing to this, that they were sincere and upright, and we are not. But nothing can be more unreasonable than this Discourse: For, (1.) The very Terms of Conformity were purposely made harder in 1662. than they were to the old Puritans. (2.) Since you own they were sincere and upright, and yet scrupled several things, you must own that there are hard and difficult Terms impos'd on us, even such as upright Men may judge so. (3.) The fruitless Endeavours of the old Puritans to gain a Reformation while they continued in the Church, is a Vindication of us in leaving it. I think 'tis one thing that those of your own side do generally advance, that Men who are dissatisfy'd in a Church, should not rashly make a Separation, but should first try all humble and proper Methods to prevail on Church-Rulers to mend the things that need Reformation. This was long done by our Predecessors, but nothing could be gain'd; but on the contrary, the Case is become worse than it was before; and therefore we think that our Conduct is most just and reasonable. (4.) The Non-conformists of old, tho they often suffer'd in one place, they were yet capable of being useful in another, in the Church of England; whereas all that are of their Principles are now by the *Bartholomew Act* render'd utterly incapable of any Service in the Church. And in truth the Conduct of the old Puritans and the present Dissenters, is not different as to the main: They were willing to keep in the Church as long as they could; and we, notwithstanding our being violently and unjustly thrust out by our Brethren, are willing again to return to them, and have all along shown it, tho they will not suffer us. And methinks, when we are forcibly thrust out, and the Door is shut with a design to keep us out, 'tis not like sincere Dealing to rail at us for not coming in. Besides, the Advantage the Papists gain by our Divisions is not directly from us, nor is it amongst us. We do not in the least flinch toward Popery, nor have they been able

to gain Profelytes among us ; but they practis'd on the same sort of Men for gaining Profelytes, as they had before for making a Division. We are not, for our Division, one whit the more inclin'd to their Doctrines, or backward to yield the most hearty Assistance against their Cause. The Advantages then that the Papists gain by our Divisions are such as these ; That they have a plausible Pretence to use with People, to recommend the Authority and Power which they pretend to overcome Mens Consciences, as they do from the Differences among Protestants in general : Or they can the more easily work on our bitterest Adversaries, who from a Spirit of Opposition are willing to depart as far as they can from us, tho at the same time they make Advances toward them : Or else having made a Division among us, they have stir'd up our Brethren to plunder and undo us, that so the Hands of such as were as zealous (at least) as any against them, might in a great measure be disabled ; and then they think when they have made use of one sort to crush the other, they can the more easily seize on the other themselves : And hereby too they think they can vindicate their own barbarous Persecutions for Conscience sake. And is it not plain to you, the Dissenters have good Reason to be sorry for there having such Advantages as these by our Divisions ? Is it not plain they had all the Reason, as well as Interest therefore to end the Division, and would have done it long ago, and so have prevented their Sufferings, if they could ?

You represented the Dissenters as *agreeing with the Papists, in drawing off People from the Communion of the Church of England*. And I told you the Church-men agree with the Papists in drawing People from the Dissenters, and gave you several Instances of your own Agreement with them, much more to the purpose than what you can alledge concerning us. But you say, *We agree with them in their common Design, of weakening the Church of England, the main Bulwark of the Reform'd Religion against Popery*. And we say you join'd with them, in endeavouring utterly to ruine the Dissenters, who were as hearty Enemies to Popery as the Church of England. But I do most humbly beseech you, notwithstanding the *Profoundness* of your *Intellectuals*, so far to condescend to the *Shallowness* of mine, as to help me to a true Notion of the Church of England, as 'tis confessedly the Bulwark of the Reform'd Religion. I fear when this comes to be clear'd, your new Gloss on your Words will appear to be only, according to your Dialect, a *Flam*, or a *Quibble*. Is it the Doctrine, the Ceremonies, the Liturgy, or the Threefold Order of the Church of England, that is this Bulwark

wark of the Reformed Religion against Popery? The Church of *England*, according to some Mens Dialect, is one of the most amphibious Creatures in the World. When any Good is done, then the Church becomes the State, and claims the Honour of having done it: If any Evil is done, then truly the Church of *England* is distinguish'd from the State; and so our Rulers and Governours may share the Disgrace among them. To speak then properly, *England* is, under God, the Bulwark of the Reform'd Religion; as it is the most potent of any of the Reform'd Countries, and does contribute such great Assistance to the Protestant Cause.

Now how do the Dissenters weaken this Bulwark? Does any Man by becoming a Dissenter grow less opposite and zealous against Popery, or less ready to join his helping Hand with the Nation against it? Has it not been publicly own'd, that the Dissenters readily concur'd with the Church of *England* in the late Revolution, to defeat the Designs of a Popish King? Are they not as zealous and hearty as any for the Prosecution of the present War against *France*? Are not our Governours fully satisfy'd in this Matter? And if *England* be consider'd as the Bulwark of the Reform'd Religion, 'tis not at all weaken'd in that respect by the Number of Dissenters. Nay, should all the Nation fall in with us in our Principles, this Bulwark would not be in the least the weaker, but rather the stronger. The only Men that I know of, whose Conduct weakens this Bulwark, are they who join'd with two Popish Princes in their Counsels, and in laying all the Hardships they could, on one Part of the Strength of this Nation, who were for imprisoning and plundering Men, (because they did their Duty, and worship'd God according to the best Light of their own Minds) and all that they might become incapable of opposing Popery: And next to these are they, who, inheriting the same Principles, have been of late attempting to revive their old Practices. Blessed be God who has not given us a Prey to their Teeth.

You ask if what I say be true, *That all Parties think themselves in the right, and love to have others of their Mind, why we don't think fit to bestow some Pains, in drawing the Quakers to our selves, since we differ more from them than you?* Now according to the Observation I have been hitherto able to make, I could never see but that the Dissenters are willing to draw from both sides. I don't perceive that they make it their Business to persuade Church-men, unless they themselves give them Opportunity; and the same they are ready to do to any others. And for my own Part, as I own the Difference vastly greater between us and Quakers or Papists, than between us and you, so I should

much

much rather convince one Quaker or Papist of the Goodness of our Cause, than ten sober and virtuous Church-men; and that because I think the Interest of the main things in Religion are vastly preferable to that of a Party. Perhaps you could not so well acquit your self, if I should put it to you to give me a Reason, why if the pretence of the Evil of Schism be the reason of your Heat, you, and Men of your Principles, are not more zealous to convince the Non-Jurors of their Guilt in that respect.

As to what you say of your Postscript, and your farther Design, I am very easy; I shew'd you, it was not difficult to run the Parallel between you and the Papists much farther. You may use your Liberty as you please: Such Methods will not hurt us; for tho' it would grieve one to see the Workings of so much Spite and Malice, yet the Management thereof, is such as only deserves Pity and Contempt.

You say, *You have observ'd in your Testimonies, p. 43. what vast Ground Popery got during the low Estate of the Church of England, and the Usurpation of Fanaticism, especially of my darling Favourite, Independency.* But you are the most unhappy Man in your Guesies of any I have met with. I have no such darling Favourite as you imagine: What I perceive to be a Truth I embrace, whether held by Independents or Episcoparians; and all that know me, know I have a Latitude in all those Matters.

Well, I have look'd into the Place in your Testimonies, and find very little to your purpose. You say, *they join'd with the Fanaticks* (the civil Title your polite Education teaches you to give us) *in carrying on an open Rebellion against King Charles I.* Very well; and is it any Wonder to see them fishing in troubled Waters, or endeavouring to embroil a Nation? And did they not join with the Church of *England* afterwards in opposing the Dissenters? *Robert Mentit de Salmonet's* Account may be true for ought I know; but I am not much inclin'd to believe it on his word. And what if there were Papists that serv'd the Parliament against the King, were there not likewise that serv'd on the other side? And what if Mr. *Edwards* says the Papists did generally shelter themselves under the Vizard of Independency: Are they not ready to do the like under any Vizard? Or have they not appear'd without any Vizard at all since the Church of *England* recover'd her self out of her low Estate? What tho' Dr. *Baily* courted *Oliver* with gross Flattery, were not others of the Church of *England* courted by the Papists in like manner? Why else was a Cardinals Hat offer'd to an Arch Bishop? Or why did the Benedictine Monk *Menardus*

as so highly flatter Arch Bishop *Laud*, as it appears he did by the Arch Bishop's Answer to him, publish'd by *Le Clerc*, in the Beginning of his Edition of the Fathers which liv'd in the Apostle's Times? Or why did the Papiſts boast ſo much in the A. Bp's Time, of the Steps made towards them? Why did the Jeſuit (*Dr. Heylin* mentions in A. Bp. *Laud's* Life, p. 416.) boall, " That the Articles of the Church of *England* ſeem pa-
 " tient, or ambitious rather of ſome Senſe, wherein they may
 " ſeem Catholick? Why was it pretended by their Party
 " That the Universities, Biſhops and Divines of this Realm
 " did daily embrace Catholick Opinions, tho they profeſs'd not
 " ſo much with Mouth or Pen, for fear of the Puritanes? Ibid.
 And a great deal more may be ſeen to the ſame purpoſe in that
 part of the Doctor's Hiſtory. In fine, You give us a mighty
 Evidence of the vaſt Ground Popery got in that time, viz. no
 leſs than *One Hundred and Fifty Perſons* are mention'd, as re-
 concil'd to *Rome* in the Year 1652. This might be a great
 thing then; but I fear it has been ſo vaſtly out-done for ſeveral
 Years together, ſince the Church of *England* got out of its low
 Eſtate, and this Bulwark was up, that it hardly deſerves to
 be remember'd, much leſs that ſuch Uſe as this ſhould be made
 of it.

You ſay, there is a *Popiſh Deſign at the Bottom of the Noiſe and Clamour* which has been lately made about *High and Low Church-men*. And indeed I fear this Noiſe and Clamour is too truly bottom'd on ſome Popiſh Deſign; not of theirs, on whom you would charge it, but of quite another ſort of Men. Good Sir, do you not think the Papiſts have ſome Deſign working, according to the Reſtleſſneſs of their Humour? They uſe not to work alone; who are they then that join with them? Are they not the Jacobites, and thoſe call'd *High Church-men*? Alas, what has been ſo publickly obſerv'd, and ſo openly ſpoken of, can't be conceal'd; and therefore I can't but with you think, there is indeed ſome Popiſh Deſign at the Bottom of the Difference, which one part of the Church of *England* has made by their violent Counſels, the Succeſs of which would have been no ſmall Joy to their good Friends of *St. Germans*, and their Abettors. I value not the Names themſelves: Call them what you pleaſe.

Is there not manifeſtly a Foundation for a Diſtinction among your ſelves? If not, whence are the mighty Struggles at Elections? Has not the Diſtinction been coin'd among your ſelves? And have you not wrote againſt one another under thoſe Names? And therefore if there be really no Foundation for Diſtinction among you, you are much to be admir'd, I confeſs, that you

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are so earnestly contending about a little *Goats Wool*. Whether your Account of your self, and your apparent Conduct do agree, I leave to the Reader to judge from your Writings. I never took you for a Pluralist, as you tax me; nor is there any thing in my words that gives any Intimation of it.

I had said (*L. 2. p. 48.*) 'Tis plain who are now most serviceable to the Popish Cause, even those who are united in Counsels with them, as the Jacobites and High Church-men actually are; and that in opposition to the Dissenters and Moderate Church-men. And there is evidently more Danger from the Opposition of the High Church, against the Moderate Church-men, than from any Disagreement between them and the Dissenters. And 'tis the Union of these two that has kept out Popery, which had otherwise overflowed the Nation.

With Reference to this Distinction, you say, *it was brought up by the Enemies of your Church*. Supposing it were, you are serv'd then only in your own kind, who so freely use the most abusive Expressions of the Dissenters. But there is no manner of Ground for you to alledge this. You say indeed, *there is no solid Reason for the Distinction, but it carries in it self downright Nonsense*. But if there be a Difference between you, and the Church of England is really divided into two different Parties, contending and quarrelling with one another, and pursuing opposite Interests every where, this must be a *solid Reason for a Distinction*; and he must be blind indeed that can't see this to be the Case at this Day. Now how would you have a Man distinguish these two Parties? I call'd them by such Names as they are generally call'd by, and as many on both sides own; and I think that was the way to be understood. But where is the downright Nonsense? Are you all agreed about the Things in Controversy? Are not some much higher in their Notions about the Things controverted, looking on them as essential, and fundamental; and others thinking them only tolerable, and wishing them laid aside? Has there not been all along two such Parties in the Church? Again, are not some high in their Notions about Persecution, and the forcible Methods of pressing those things on the Dissenters; while others are for our full Liberty? Are not some high-flown in passing damning Sentences on us, while others charitably love us as Christians and Brethren? Again, Do not many plead against any Alterations, as tho there were no good and just Occasion for them; while others plead for Alteration, and say there is a good and just Occasion? You may shuffle, if you will, and dissemble this, but all Men know it to be true, that
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it is thus among all Sorts and Ranks of you. Do not you your self distinguish Bishops in, and Bishops of the Church? Do you not cut off a great many Church-men, by denying them to be true Church-men, or true Members of the Church of *England*? You really in effect grant the Distinction, but only according to the Mode of High-Church, and a pretty Jingle, Low-Church is No-Church. This, Sir, I hope, will help you to understand my Meaning, which was sufficiently plain. It concerns not me to determine which Side acts most fairly; what I observ'd is a known Truth, That these High Church-men do actually join with the Jacobites and Papists. And as they were such kind of Men that loaded us at first with Hardships, and made the Division, and have kept it up, so it has been the Party which oppos'd them; viz. The Moderate or Low Church-men, who have prevented the Effect and Accomplishment of their Designs.

You next consider what things are fundamental and necessary, and so not to be alter'd on any Occasion, p. 16. And here the first thing is the *Threefold Order of Ministry*. But here the Question is, Whether you may not keep your Fundamental, and yet indulge others a Liberty of not looking on it as a Fundamental? (Whether if this be a Truth, it is such an one that it is absolutely necessary every Minister should believe it.) You say, *No one can be esteem'd a true Member of the Church of England, that is not sincerely ready to part with his Life, rather than the said Apostolical Constitution.* But why then do you urge the Dissenters, who would not part with their Lives, you may be sure, at such a rate, to become Members of the Church of *England*? If they follow'd the Example you mention'd of the old Puritans, and conform'd, they would not be look'd on as true Members of the Church of *England*; and therefore, in my mind, they had better be in such a Church, of which they may be look'd on as the true Members.

Next you add, *As for Liturgies, and Forms of Prayer, tho they are not absolutely necessary in themselves,* (which I am glad to hear of, for Rashness in Prayer may then be prevented without them) yet, "It becomes necessary (to use Mr. Calvin's words) "that the publick Prayers should be stated or fix'd, from which "it may not be lawful for any Minister to vary, in the Exercise of his Function; as well in consideration of the Weakness and Ignorance of some, as that it may appear how all "Churches agree among themselves, and withall that "there may be a stop put to the giddy Lightness of some who "affect Novelties. And because you think these three Reasons will be always of Force, it will be necessary always to retain your

our excellent Liturgy, tho you should charitably condescend to the Alteration of some Expressions in it. In your Testimonies, p. 4. you cite part of this Testimony; and there you make Calvin not to say, IT IS NECESSARY, as you do here, but only that HE HIGHLY APPROV'D, which is more agreeable to his words, *valde probato*. But if you allow of Mr. Calvin's Argument, you must wholly exclude conceiv'd Prayer, which I think you ought not to do, because of what I have alledg'd to shew the Necessity thereof, where Forms are us'd: And besides you condemn your own Church, which allows Ministers to use conceiv'd Prayer before their Sermons, as I observ'd, p. 15. of my 1st Letter. But let us consider the particular Reasons themselves: His first Reason is, *the Consideration of the Weakness and Ignorance of some*. And 'tis very possible that others, if they had liv'd in his Time, would have thought this Consideration of great moment in the behalf of Forms. When the Alteration was made in our Churches, it can't be wonder'd at, that there were many weak and ignorant Persons, who kept in their Livings; and if they had not, all their Vacancies could not presently have been fill'd up with better: So that if there had not been some such Provision as this, there must have been no Prayers at all in some Parishes, and Mr. Calvin complains of the Scarcity of able Ministers at that time in that very Epistle. And if that was a Reason then, sure you will not say that this is the Case of the Church of England now, that she is not able to supply all her Parishes with such as are not weak and ignorant; and therefore as this is only a Reason why weak Persons should use Forms, so 'tis to be hoped Care may be taken to keep such out.

His second Reason is, *That it may certainly appear how all the Churches agree among themselves*. For my Part, tho I highly value Mr. Calvin's Memory, yet I can't say, that I think this Argument conclusive: For I think it may certainly appear, that Churches do agree as far as is necessary without such Forms. And why an account of the ordinary Matter of the several Churches Prayers, tho there be no Forms us'd, is not sufficient to answer that end, I do not as yet understand.

Mr. Calvin's last Reason is, *That there may be a stop put to the giddy Lightness of some who affect Novelties*. But 'tis very strange if Care may not be taken to prevent this without Forms: For my part, I profess, I'm as much an Enemy to the mixing any novel Fancies with Publick Devotions, as the most zealous Advocates for Forms can be; and if Men are not capable of discharging that Duty (or willing to do it) without affecting such Novelties, I think they are very unfit to be admitted to the sacred Office.

You say, *No true Church-man can come so low as to part with the Liturgy.* But I believe I do not mistake the Minds of some Church-men, who use it as impos'd, and judging it tolerable and who would not, if left to themselves, prefer the use of it. But what kind of Church-men do you urge us to be, when you persuade us to come into the Church, notwithstanding our Dislike of some things? True Church-men you would not allow us to be, supposing we come not up to your Esteem of the Liturgy; and therefore I think you had better be easy, to let us continue true Dissenters.

You say, *That all other Rites and Ceremonies us'd in your Church, and scrupled at by the Dissenters (as the Cross in Baptism, God-fathers, and God-Mothers, Kneeling at the Sacrament, Surplice, &c.) are so far not fundamental or necessary, as to admit of Alteration on weighty and just Occasions: And therefore you cannot but think that every true Church-man is charitably dispos'd to condescend to such Alterations as shall be requisite on weighty and just Occasions.*

I should be heartily glad to see some Evidence of this Charity in all true Church-men. But 'tis sufficiently plain, this Concession signifies just nothing: For as you have hitherto, so far as I can find (and especially if I may judge by your self) you are resolv'd to deny that any such weighty and just Occasion has, or will ever come: So that this is very little to the Satisfaction of the Dissenters.

You next proceed to enquire, *What is or is not a just Occasion for such Alterations?* Give me leave (before I proceed to consider what you say particularly on this Head) to take notice to you what I look on as a just Occasion for making Alterations.

(1.) If there be any things confessedly amiss in any Church, there is just occasion for Alterations, by mending those things which are amiss. And that there are some things amiss in your Church, I think will not be denied. Your Lay-Chancellors, want of Discipline with reference to scandalous Persons, (whether Clergy or Laity) do certainly call for Reformation: Why do you not therefore set about making Alterations in these? For my part, I really judge you can't in any Method better serve your own Cause; and I profess, tho you should hereby lessen the Number of Dissenters, and should not widen your Door so far as to satisfy me to come in, I should yet heartily rejoice, from the great Love I have to Reformation.

(2.) Suppose the things impos'd as indifferent, are by a great Number of Christians judg'd sinful, and from the Imposition does arise (as there then necessarily must) Discord and Strife; there is then Reason for altering the Imposition: For tho the

things

things should really prove lawful, yet the Imposers can't themselves be free from Blame, inasmuch as they do by this means lay a Snare for them, and without any necessity give occasion for that Strife. And this is the Case as to many things enjoin'd ; we judge them unlawful, you say they are indifferent ; and therefore without necessity you breed Discords and Strife among Christians. So that, tho' 'twere suppos'd the Imposers had really a Title to a much larger Power than my Notions do allow, yet I can't see how they can excuse themselves from blame while they insist on such things. Let me now consider what you say concerning a just Occasion of Alterations. You say, *Nothing else can be such, but the attaining a greater Good by them than can be attain'd without them.* * Now here you think 'tis to be consider'd, whether the Alterations contended for by us, will not do as much hurt one way, by shutting the Door closer than needs be against the Papists, as it may do good, by opening the Door wider than needs be to the Dissenters. But the Answer to this is easy ; Set the Door as Christ and his Apostles left it, and then the blame will lie on those who do not come in on either side. But 'tis a little strange that you, Sir, who can't but understand the monstrous Opinions of the Papists, should think that these little things in dispute should, if laid aside, be any Hinderance to the Papists coming over to us, supposing them convinc'd of the great Matters asserted by Protestants in opposition to them. Will a Man that believes the Doctrines of Transubstantiation, Infallibility, Purgatory, &c. to be false and abominable, remain in that Church for the sake of a Surplice, the Sign of the Cross, &c. I profess you amaze me by such Discourse : If you will not see you are to be pitied, I will not say for your Intellectuals, but for your Obstinacy. But the thing is plain, that the Difference between you and the Papists is in such vastly greater things, that the keeping of these little Matters, is the most inconsiderable Trifle in the World toward the gaining of them ; but I think our Differences are so small, as that they may easily be accomodated. So that here is a greater Good that is really very probable, and the Danger on the other hand is grounded only on a trifling Surmize.

But you go on, and tell us, that *to this must be added, that such Alterations may become a stumbling Block to some that are at present of our own Communion, and who may possibly be so weak as to think more highly of the things to be laid aside than they ought ; and therefore go over from us to the Papists on that account.*

I'm glad you speak this ; I doubt not it would have been reckon'd a Crime in any one else, to say, That *some of your Communion are so weak, as to think more highly of those things*

than they ought. And hence I see that the Church-men, according to your self, are not all agreed, any more than the Dissenters; and that it were easy to make such a Representation of you, as you have done of us, and that on better Grounds than you can pretend; as you may see by comparing what I say in my Third Letter. But I would fain know what you mean, *by their thinking of these things more highly than they ought.* I can't see but that if they think of them so highly, as to be willing to swallow all the monstrous Doctrines, Superstitions, and Idolatries of the Romish Church with them, (which is the Case you put) they must look upon them as fundamental and essential things with a Witness, and not as indifferent and alterable; and consequently they must practise these Commandments of Men as taught for Doctrines; And you say your self, *p. 15. of your First Letter to a Dissenting Parishioner, That Christ rebukes the Jews for teaching such their Traditions (as are mentioned, Mat. 15.) for Doctrines, that is, making them of equal Obligation and Necessity with the Commandments of God.* Hence therefore I infer, that such an Apprehension of these Things is sinful, and consequently your own Argument does condemn you, and shews the Necessity of those Alterations against which you alledge it. For hence 'tis plain, that the retaining these Things does really tend to lead such Men into Sin, while they use them in such a manner; and by this means the Consciences of your weak Brethren among your selves are wounded. I have often thought this Argument had weight in it, but did not expect you would ever give me such Occasion to make Use of it: You may try how you can get off it.

But I will be so free with you as to ask you one Question; and that is, Whether you do in your Conscience believe that any one good Christian in your Communion would by such Alterations be tempted to believe Transubstantiation, &c. and so to go over from you to the Church of *Rome*? In my Apprehension all those Persons you can suppose your selves in danger of losing, are such, as are real Blemishes in any Church, and should be rather turn'd out than kept in. And do you think that by Alterations you shall gain none from the Dissenters worth having? Why then are you so desirous to persuade them to come over to you?

1st. You say the farthest Alterations *that can with a good Conscience be consented to by a true Church-man, even in things not necessary, is only this, that every Person may be left to his own Liberty, or to follow his own Perswasion in these Particulars, to wit, to have Godfathers, or have none, to have his*

Child

Child sign'd or not sign'd with the Cross. Here I think I may assure you that I know several who differ so much from you, as to give a just Foundation for their being call'd Low-Churchmen. But let that pass. I say then, if this be the lowest, and you have fully express'd your mind, it will not do, for the utmost you go, is to leave Parents at liberty: But for ought I see, the Minister must be oblig'd to comply with the Parents desire, let it be one way or the other. If you intend more than you express, viz. that the Minister shall have his Liberty also, and where Minister and Parent can't agree, it shall be allowed the Parent to apply himself to another who will agree to his Desire; this will fully remove this Part of our Difference.

2dly. You say *there can be no good or just Occasion, but when a CERTAIN Good will follow.* I thought such short-sighted Creatures, as we all are, must often act on far less Assurance than what you demand. A probable Good may be reason enough for Alterations. But any one may see what all this means, and you sufficiently discover elsewhere your aversion to any Alterations whatever. But suppose there were no other certain Good did ensue but the reforming your selves, and the rendring the Dissenters inexcusable, this were a just and weighty Occasion enough for Alterations, as the Case stands with you.

But you say *it must be consider'd, (1.) Whether it will not become requisite to this End, that all the Dissenters that are come to Years of Discretion should in the first Place give it under their Hands, that such Alterations and Concessions will satisfy them, and should by some or other valuable Obligation strictly engage themselves to leave off their Separation, as soon as ever the said Concessions should be made, &c.* Well then, if this is a Matter to be consider'd, and all were of your Mind, I would for ever abandon all thoughts of Union. Must this be the only thing to be reckon'd a certain Good? Suppose one half of the Dissenters were gain'd, were it not worth your while to make Alterations, to rescue so many Souls out of that State of Damnation, which you apprehend them in on the account of their Schism? If you think not, you are of a Mind as opposite to his, whose Ministers you pretend to be, as is Darkness to Light. Interest will oblige the Dissenters to fall in with those Concessions they seek for, and therefore there is no need of our giving it under our Hands. What valuable Obligation you mean I know not, but imagine it must be such as you would not care Church-Men should come under, not to return again to their old Encroachments.

(2.) You say *'tis to be consider'd, whether though all the present Dissenters that are at Age should hereby be brought over, yet*

it may not be reasonably fear'd, that in 10 or 12 Years a new Generation may arise (in short) of Dissenters. Suppose it, yet you have sav'd the Present according to your own Notions : But I think 'tis not to be doubted, that if Church-Communion be set on a Scripture-Foot, there will be no Danger of this among serious Christians. Humane Impositions tend to Division, Divine only to Peace and Unity. But you will shew that *this is a supposable Case from what has been already*, and here you tell me a Story which you *have heard* : But perhaps you know not when, nor where you heard it. The Story I alledg'd I had, as I said, from a Person of Credit, and could easily have it most solemnly confirm'd, if needful, and contains nothing incredible in it ; and perhaps your self are not unacquainted with an English Bishop much of the same mind. I have heard as much of him, but not having that Evidence I had in the other Case, did not mention him. But you tell us a Story not very credible, and do not so much as tell us, whether you believe it your self. 'Tis not easy to believe Men would not keep a Copy by them of what they deliver'd, nor is it probable they would begin with specifying the Alterations they desir'd. But such sort of Stories the Dissenters are us'd to, and much such another you may see confuted in the Appendix to Mr. Baxter's Life, p. 108. But then you argue in the next place from what I say, that 'tis one receiv'd Principle of the Dissenters, that no Man or Body of Men are the Standard of Truth ; and that their Notions are not to be enslav'd to the Sentiments of those whom they most value. And I humbly ask you, Whether this is not the receiv'd Principle of all Protestants of the Church of England, and even, Sir, of your self ? Who is the Man, or which is the Body of Men you esteem the Standard of Truth ? Whom do you so value as to enslave your Notions to their Sentiments ? You talk like a Man hugely fond of Infallibility ; Please to inform the World, when you know, where to fix it : In the mean while give me leave to remember the Direction of Christ, who is indeed the Standard of Truth ; *call no Man Father on Earth*, Matt. 23. 9. As to what you add, I think I never did desire an Alteration of any Fundamental in Religion, unless you are to be Judge.

You say, That *I may hence learn how far 'tis in the Power of the Church to end the Division.* But I see no Power the Church has to alter one thing establish'd by Act of Parliament : Thank God for it ; or else the poor Dissenters must have been in as sorry a Case as ever. The Church may do much to procure Alterations, but I never could hear of any Instance of a general Willingness and Readiness to do any thing, except when they

they were afraid of being over-run with Popery in King James II's Time. And so you may easily judge what I mean by saying, *'Tis in the Power of the Parliament to remove those things which keep the Breach wide open*: That is, that as the Obligation that lies on those of the establish'd Communion, to observe the things in dispute, is from the Parliament, they can alter the Obligation at Pleasure: And since you shew such an Aversion to Alterations, I can't think it would be a Reflection on the Wisdom of the Parliament, to take that Matter into Consideration; and to endeavour by New Acts to unite those whom former Acts have separated one from another.

You are free to apply those Words, *APOSTOLICAL CONSTITUTION*, to what you please. I assure you I neither believe the three-fold Order to be such, nor will I ever so subscribe it; and that is now under debate between us. As to the Common Prayer, I should be glad, if you reckon that also among the Apostolical Constitutions (as you seem to do) that you would direct me to the Chapter and Verse where I may find it; for I know not where to look for it at present. And whatever were the Calamities that ensued on those Former Troubles in State as well as Church, they were owing to other Causes, which 'twere easy to declare, would they not be disagreeable to your self. What you add in the next Paragraph is answer'd already.

And for your Prayer, Sir, if it proceed from Brotherly Love, and Christian Charity; I thank you for it, and shall earnestly desire the Prayers of all good Christians upon the same account. I own I am subject to *covetous Desires*, and need Grace to make me more and more forsake them, which I also make it my Business to endeavour. I own that such kind of Desires have been a strong Temptation to me to be of your Mind; But I bless God my Integrity I hold fast, and trust that by his Grace I always shall do so, and not deliberately forsake the way of my Duty. But if your Prayer is (as I suppose any one will esteem it) design'd for a Slander, as though covetous Desires were the Reason of my Non-Conformity; Don't think that your Malice will be sanctify'd by your putting it into a Prayer: No, Sir, it is more heinous in the Sight of God, than if it were simply express'd, while you prophane God's Name, and abuse the Duty of Prayer, to cover your Violation of his Commandment.

I think there is nothing in your Letter at the end to a Dissenting Parishioner, that needs any Answer: I shall therefore only take notice of one Passage or two, that by them the Reader may judge of the rest. You would represent the Dissenting Ministers

sters as spreading false Reports, and not scrupling to pervert the Counsels and Designs of a Parliament, in order to encourage their Followers in their Schism and Separation. Because some of your Parishioners have taken upon them to tell you of *some-what agitated the last Session, in opposition to your Judgment of our Separation being a Schism or a damnable Sin.* But is it not hard, that the Dissenting Ministers must be charg'd after this Rate, for a little Mistake in the words of those, *Whose Business* (as you tell us) *lies most among the bellowing of Cattle and bleating of Sheep?* Put but the word Parliament inlead of Session, and all is easy and clear, and you know it to be most true. And could you not easily have help'd them over this Difficulty? I think you might *without much spending your self, or being spent for them.* And I suppose there may be the like Reason for your talking of false Reports, industriously spread abroad, concerning what pass'd between your most worthy Diocesan and your self at his late Visitation. Some improper Term, it is likely, has been used by an honest Country-man, who pretends not to nicety of Language, and that you think a sufficient ground for you to make complaint of false Reports. I am not concern'd to know what pass'd between you and your Diocesan, for whom I have a great value, and who, I perswade my self, is a Man of too moderate Counsels and Spirit to approve of your boisterous and turbulent Uncharitableness; and I assure you I rejoiced at his Preferment, and do reckon him an excellent Ornament of your Church: But perhaps suspect, that he is yet upon his good Behaviour with you, whether it may be more truly said of him, that he is a Bishop in, than of the Church of *England.*

And thus I think I have highly honour'd this trifling Scribble by a particular Answer. I earnestly request you, that you would hereafter, if not for my sake, yet out of a Regard to your own Credit and Cause, write with more Care and Evidence. If the Advice of my Friends had reach'd me before this was near finish'd, 'tis probable I had sav'd my self the Labour, and not answer'd what I will take leave to say, really neither needed nor deserv'd an Answer from,

Reverend Sir,

Your most Affectionate, and,
Faithful Servant in Christ,

James Peirce.

A Sixth Letter Address'd to Dr. Wells, in Answer to his Letter concerning his own, and the Author's Theses about Presbyterian Ordination.

Honoured Doctor;

HAVING comply'd with your Motion of dividing the second Part of your Letter to Mr. D. into three distinct Parts, and publish'd a Sheet in Answer to what you were pleas'd to advance in defence of the first Part; I was expecting an Answer from you to that Sheet at least: But instead of that, I received yours of the 20th of January, relating only to a very small and inconsiderable part of either your own, or my Letter concerning the Subject of our present Controversy.

You propose, p. 4. to consider *two or three of your own Theses*, but speak to but one of them, which needed not to be spoken to at all: And of my 24 Theses you consider but two: It appears therefore to me that you resolve to make a long Squabble, to which I assure you I have no Inclination. If you always take this Method, and when I fairly answer at once whatever you advance, you will split every one of my Answers, after this your new Fashion, into so many Parts, for ought I see the longer we write, the farther we are from the End of the Controversy. I can leave it with any impartial and judicious Reader to judge, whether my Theses were not sufficiently clear in expressing what was of such Moment in the Controversy, as to deserve a particular Answer, and whether the pretended reason of the Delay of an Answer to 22 of them, has any good ground; and withal whether there is any thing in your whole Letter to answer the Title Page, since you neither attempt to prove that any one of your Propositions do's, or any one of mine do's not hold Good.

My Fourth Letter began with these words: *Tho I do not well understand the Reason why you are pleas'd to break your Answer to me (who have already so fully express'd my mind in my Remarks) into so many distinct Parts, as you now propose, yet, &c.*

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And with reference to this you tell me, *it seems very Strange to you that I should use such an Expression, since you had taken care to make the Reason of your so doing as clear as possible even to any common Understanding.*

But if you had taken due Notice of that Parenthesis, which you leave out; but I have now again inserted, it needed not to have seem'd at all strange to you. For when I had *so fully express'd my Mind in my Remarks*, there could be no need to proceed so gradually as you propose. If I had spoken darkly and obscurely, there might have been some Pretence for this; but as the Case stands, and I had giv'n a distinct answer to your Arguments, I can't see why you should not have made it your Business to have clear'd and vindicated them all at once. I did therefore then think the Reason you pretended was (as you express your self elsewhere) *a Flam*: And that in Imitation of the Learned Chaldeans, Dan. 2. you were endeavouring by a shuffling answer to *Gain the time*, and stave off the main Controversy, and so perhaps tire out your Adversary, as well as your Reader. And in this Apprehension, your last Letter has very much confirm'd me, as I doubt not it will many others.

And thus I'm got half way through your Letter, and am now to consider what you say concerning your first Thesis, which is,

Thesis I. The Validity of any Ordination do's immediately depend on the valid Authority of him or them, by whom is perform'd the said Ordination.

In reference hereunto I had these Words: *Your first Proposition, I conceive, do's not affect the Controversy, for the Controversy being, Whether Presbyters have valid Authority to ordain as well as Bishops, if it appear they have, Presbyterian Ordination will be safe and valid, tho the Proposition be granted: and therefore to avoid the lengthning the Dispute, I will answer your other Propositions on supposition of the Truth of this.*

There are three things in this Paragraph, which displease you, which I shall now consider.

The first I shall consider is, what I alledge to be the Controversy, viz. *Whether Presbyters have valid Authority to ordain as well as Bishops.* And this you deny to be the Controversy; forasmuch

as both the Word [Presbyters] and also the Word [Bishops] are each capable of, and have been us'd in various Significations. But you say it is this, Whether Presbyters, so call'd at the time of the Reformation, have valid Authority to ordain, as well as Bishops so call'd at the said time of the Reformation? And much to the same purpose is your 18th Page. But have I not fully clear'd this Matter, and taken Care to prevent this empty jangling? Have I not expressly deny'd the ambiguous Use of the word Presbyter, when taken for an Office? Lett. 1. p. 44. Have I not expressly deny'd Bishops, and Presbyters to be two distinct sacred Offices? Why do you not prove that Ambiguity which you talk so much of? and shew some good Foundation for your Distinction (p. 18.) of Presbyters properly so call'd, and the other sort of Presbyters, what ever Name you will call them by? Again, had I not expressly deny'd,

Prop. X. That the Scripture do's distinguish two Offices, the one with the Power of Ordination, Preaching and Administring Sacraments; and the other with the Power only of Preaching, and Administring Sacraments? Could any thing be more full than these, and several things more are to shew how I understood the Word Presbyters? Could any Man doubt of my Meaning? Is it not evident that I endeavour to prove that there is but one sort of Presbyters mention'd in the New Testament? and that to them belongs the Power of Ordination? and consequently this Power is lodg'd in all those that are rightly ordain'd to that Sacred Office? It matters not at all what Notions they had at the Reformation. The Question is, Whether those that are ordain'd Presbyters are ordain'd to a Sacred Office instituted in the New Testament; if they are, they must have all those Powers God has annex'd to that Office, and consequently that of Ordination.

Another thing you dislike in that Paragraph, is, that I say, Your Thesis does not affect the Controversy. And you endeavour to prove it does, because the Truth or Falsity of it affects the Controversy. The Falsity thus; If the Proposition is false, then the contrary is true; and so the Controversy is needless. The Truth thus; That if the Falsity of it shews the Controversie needless, the Truth of it shews it needful. This is in short your Argument: And to it I answer; That our Controversie is not, whether the Controversie it self be needful; but whether Presbyterian Ordination be valid? And this can be only affected by a Proposition which serves to determine it, as this does not. The Falsity of it affects it only on my side;

and so, if I thought fit, I might make use of the contrary Proposition: But it does not at all affect the Controversie on your side; for if it be false, no Conclusion can be justly drawn from it as tho it were true: And then on the other hand, the Truth of it does not affect the Controversie, since, if it be true, you can't make any use of it in the present Controversie, because as that lies between us, it will serve on either side, to shew that Ordination valid which is perform'd by Persons who appear to have valid Authority to ordain. And therefore tho this Proposition may affect other Controversies about Ordination, yet ours it does not. And I think all Men will grant, that that Proposition may be justly said not to affect a Controversie; which, when granted, will contribute nothing to the determining of the Controversie it self. Your own words, *p. 14.* confirm this; 'In a word, my first Proposition is the only 'Basis, or Ground-truth, whereon the Validity of any Ordination, Episcopal or Presbyterian, is firmly to be built. Now if this be true, the Controversie between us can never be determin'd by this Proposition; it serves indifferently on either side, till by other Arguments it be made appear who have, and who have not valid Authority to ordain.

Another thing you are displeas'd with, is, *That tho I do at present grant your Proposition, and suppose the Truth of it, yet this is out of my meer Grace and Favour, in order to avoid lengthening the Dispute, and not out of any necessity I lie under to do so, by reason of the Certainty and Evidence of the Truth therein contain'd.* And here you insist on my speaking particularly and fully to the Truth or Falshood of that Proposition. The Reader may here evidently see how very different your Aim is from mine: I am for shortening the Dispute, and passing over such Propositions as do not relate to it: And on the contrary, you insist on the debating a Question, wholly foreign to it.

I think, according to all the Rules of Disputation, a Respondent (and my only Business is to act that Part while I am answering your Theses) is bound only to grant or deny what is advanc'd by his Adversary. And no such Terms were ever put on any Respondent, as you pretend to put upon me. I have granted you your Thesis, and when you find me retract my Concession, then you may complain; and in the mean while make the best use you can of it, my Cause do's not need the denial of it; and I resolve not to give you Scope to gratify your Humour of running away from the Point in hand: And if my granting your Proposition in this way will not satisfy you, you must in short expect no Satisfaction

tion from me. I could easily tell you how many needless Controversies I hereby prevent, which would delay our coming to the Merits of the Cause : And since I grant it you, you will best shew that it affects the Controvertie, by using it as a Medium to prove the Invalidity of Presbyterian Ordination; which I do not expect to see done by you to any good Purpose.

Next I proceed to consider what you say to my two first Theses. The first is,

Th. I. That no Office can be justly look'd on as sacred which God has not appointed.

This you deny, if I mean *which God himself has not appointed* ; but grant, if I mean *he has not appointed it himself, or by some other, divinely commission'd and authoriz'd*. Now my Meaning is, that no Office can be justly look'd upon as sacred, which God has not appointed himself, or by some other divinely commission'd or authoriz'd THEREUNTO. That is, I think it very possible, that those who may be commission'd Officers and Rulers in his Church, may pretend to set up a new sort of Officers therein, without any particular Instructions for their so doing ; and in this Case, since neither their general Commission, nor any special Inspiration, do warrant their Proceedings, I deny that any such Office devis'd by them, can be justly look'd on *as any way appointed by God, or therefore as sacred* : And consequently, according to Prop. III. I deny that any Office can be look'd on as sacred, which we find not in the New Testament.

My Second Thesis is,

II. The Offices which God has appointed, and the Powers which he has respectively annexed to them, are inseparable.

And as to this I need only let you know that I understand it in that Sense only in which you grant it. I own the same Power may be annex'd to more Offices than one ; but I assert, that no sacred Office can be depriv'd of any Power which God has annex'd to it. And this you might easily see by the Use I make of it in my fourth Proposition, and the way in which I there apply it.

And thus I have consider'd your Letter ; all that remains is your Postscript.

And

And here in the beginning you put on the Air of a wonderful mild and peaceable Person, willing to undergo any Personal Reflections unjustly cast upon you. But this Air does not at all become you, who have been so free in calling personal Reflections upon me, without any Shadow of Reason, as I have shewn in my Third Letter. For my own part, I hate Personal Matters brought into a Controversy, and was heartily sorry I was forc'd to say so much on that Head in my own necessary Defence.

That the Reader may understand the Matter of this Postscript, I must acquaint him, that whereas you did in your Letter to Mr. D. charge false Doctrine in Eleven Instances on the Dissenting Teachers, I told you, you had mistaken the Dissenters. In answer to this, you tell us in your Examination, p. 14. *In short, the reason why you singled out those Eleven Particulars of false Doctrine rather than others, was this, Because they were such as had been most frequently OBJECTED to you by the Dissenters with whom you had discoursed.* And to this the Second Part of my Postscript related; where I say, *I have hinted in my Letter some Reasons why I did not think the Doctor had fairly represented the Objections of the Dissenters he had to do with: And I am since inform'd, that an Enquiry has been made among his Parishioners, and that they disown those Objections, and say they are of the Doctor's own devising, and complain of their being abus'd by him.*

Your first Answer to this will not seem plausible, to those who consider what I have alledg'd, to shew how improbable it is that ever any Dissenters should make some of those Objections; and particularly those contain'd in your first and last Instances, are such as I shrewdly suspect you can never fasten upon any of them.

Do you think your own Dissenting Parishioners did not know that Mr. D. receiv'd Pay? Or could they know it, and yet make the Objection you answer in your last Instance? And however, was it not disingenuous in you to charge such false Doctrine; when it appears plainly by several Passages in your Writings, that you knew Mr. D. did receive Pay? But however, if you are at all satisfy'd in their disowning those Objections, I see no reason why I should not be satisfied also.

In your Second Answer, you expect your bare Word should be (at least) as soon taken as theirs. I leave that with you to the impartial Reader; but only I will give you this hint, that a Man who expects his Word should be taken by others, should shew so much Civility himself, as not to be forward and confident

ident in charging others, as you have done over and over Mr. D. and my self, *with Untruths, down-right Quibbles, Flims, &c.* In short, the Liberty you take of misrepresenting me, gave me a jealousy you had not truly represented them.

And I can easily think you have some other Reason beside what you set down, why you, who so freely charge Mr. D. and my self with Untruths, are yet so sparing of the Names of others.

But I see you have left room still for another Evasion, for you say, *You are able to name the Persons, who either in their Discourses have expressly made use of the said Objections, or else by their Behaviour have given you sufficient Ground to infer, they were carried away with such Objections.* So that they may be able truly to deny the Objections; and yet you think you can prove them upon them, not from their *Words*, but from their *Behaviour*. You will do well to give us some Explication: Suppose you egregiously mislook their Behaviour, and they say it had quite another Meaning. In short, Sir, you are the most accomplish'd Person in the Art of Shuffling I ever yet met with: First you charge the Dissenting Teachers with teaching false Doctrine, because the People hold such and such Doctrines, and their Teachers do not go about to undeceive them; and now the People are charg'd, not for their making these false Doctrines their own Objections, but because their holding them may be infer'd from their Behaviour. Certainly this kind of Evidence would not pass in any Court, nor will it be regarded by Men of Sense. This does not look like the Discourse of a Man innocent in the Matter charg'd upon him.

You seem to lay a great Stress on your Third Answer, which has no manner of Strength in it.

You talk of your Letter to a Dissenting Parishioner, with which I was not in the least concern'd when I wrote my first Letter, having then never read it. And can it seem strange to any Man, that your Parishioners should never complain that you had abus'd them, by publishing those Eleven Instances as their Objections, when you do not pretend in that Letter to have learn'd them of them? This Pretence was started in your Examination; and no sooner did it appear, but it was complain'd of. I never put the *Evasion* into their Heads, nor did I in any ways directly or indirectly move that an Enquiry should be made: But after I had sent my Letter to the Press, that Information was sent me, That an Enquiry had been made, and that some of your Parishioners on the reading of the 14th Page of your
Exa-

Examination, had themselves taken notice of the Abuse: So that I think this Matter is made sufficiently clear.

I confess, when I came to read *your Letter to a Dissenting Parishioner*, I could easily perceive that you father'd some of your Objections therein on your Parishioners; and therefore when I was writing my Second Letter, I did desire a Friend to enquire whether they own'd those Objections; and receiv'd an Answer, That they had mention'd some of them in Discourse with you, naming the Particulars. And whatever Opinion others may have of them, I look'd on the Answer as an Evidence they were plain, honest and well-meaning Men: And I make no doubt, but they would have as freely own'd your Eleven Instances, as they did some of your Objections in *that Letter to a Dissenting Parishioner*, if there had been as good Reason for it.

So that you may now see that *this Subject*, when rightly understood, *will afford no Matter for Ridicule* (unless you are dispos'd to ridicule your self.) I can't but think you have Inclination enough that way, your whole Management shews it; but you want an Opportunity. And tho I am not fond of citing Scraps of Latin, yet I fear not the Judgment of any impartial Person, whether the exposing what is extreamly ridiculous, as I did, is either *pedantick* or *foolish*: Or whether even that way I took, was not (as I design'd it) expressive of a just neglect of what was so excessively trifling.

In your Fourth Answer, you tell me of some *Dissenters* (*who live not far off*) *who say, that not you, but I, have misrepresented them; and are displeas'd and down-right angry with me, for disowning their Opinions, as not to be defended.*

For my part, I never pretended that all the Dissenters were of my mind; nor do I think it strange, if some of them should dislike some things which I say. But I must confess, it seems a little strange to me, that any of them should say, *you have not misrepresented them.* I profess I know no Dissenter, whether Presbyterian, Independent, or Anabaptist, who will say so of your first or last Instance. And they can have no Reason to say, that *I have misrepresented them*, who never pretended to make any Representation of their Opinions at all, but only of such Opinions as were more generally held among the Dissenters; and therefore I doubt not but upon Consideration, their Anger will be pacified, especially since I leave it most freely to them to make what Representation they please of their own Opinions. But this I can say, that my Representation has been favourably receiv'd among all those differing Perswasions

So far as I could ever hear, till you sent me this Information. And if I may be worthy to know what Corner those Dissenters live in, I will give my self the Trouble to enquire into the Reasons of their Displeasure, that I may remove them. And if it will be any means to engage you to give me such a kind Information, I will give you a somewhat-like one concerning the Reception of your Writings in this Town; and that is, That whereas your Party were very confident in their Boastings of your Performance as unanswerable, before the Remarks appear'd; we hear now nothing of that nature, but they are as silent in the Matter, as tho they were asham'd of you; and some of them have expressly said as much.

Your last Consideration is strangely unaccountable; for whereas you charge those Opinions on the common Dissenters, and then on their Teachers, *Exam. p. 51.* And at the End of your Eleven Instances, say to Mr. D. Let. to Mr. D. p. 21. *These, Sir, are the several Instances of false Doctrine spread abroad, and taught by the false Teachers of these Times, &c.* 'Tis plain you design'd to represent those Instances, as taught by the Dissenters. See my 3d Let. p. 9. And therefore if they are not taught by them, you have misrepresented them. And if your Testimonies are a Contradiction to this, I am not concern'd in the Matter: It belongs to you, and not to me, to reconcile them to your Letter.

And if there be any thing in what you say, why did you not give up the Charge? Why did you ask me that Question, *Exam. Part I. p. 16.* *Whether tho I deny that the Dissenting Teachers do openly teach some of those Particulars, yet I am not conscious to my self, they do by several ways intimate to the People their Approbation, or at least their not dislike of them.*

And thus, Sir, I have answer'd this very trifling Letter. I expect now, that without any more ado, you attempt a distinct Answer to all my Theses, and a Vindication of all yours. And unless you do so, I must see better Reasons than I can at present, to make we write any more. And had I not another Answer to join with this, I should never publish it by it self. I delight not to impose upon the Reader with filling Pages with needless Repetitions. Come therefore at length close to the Controversy; and let me see that you are willing to bring it to some Issue; (for tho I am willing to do any thing that can be reasonably desir'd toward the clearing the Truth, yet I abhor an endless and unprofitable Wrangling.) And give me occasion to write an Answer of some just Size, and I will

not (God willing) fail you: Or otherwise I now take leave of you; heartily thankful for the great Confirmation my Opinion has receiv'd by the means of your weak Opposition; and so I recommend you to the Divine Blessing, wishing you good Health, and a sound Judgment;

And Remain,

Honoured Doctor,

Your most Affectionate,

Newbury, Feb.
the 12th, 1707.

And Faithful Servant

In Christ,

James Peirce.

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